



CITY COUNCIL

May 16, 2005

The Honorable Michael R. Turner, Chairman
Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census
Committee on Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Turner:

On behalf of the City of Sparks, Nevada, it is an honor to submit to you and your committee testimony in support of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

This testimony focuses on our public service component of the CDBG program. In our county we have established a regional effort, comprised of three local governments, one county and its two main cities, to address grant funding for human services provision through non-profit agencies. That process is the Washoe County Human Services Consortium. In 1998 Reno, Sparks and Washoe County received a Housing and Urban Development best practices award for this consortium, as an innovative approach for delivering human services grants in a single efficient, consolidated process.

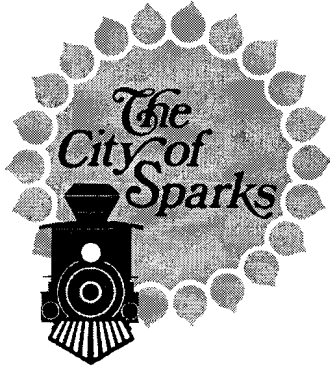
Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of a program that has had a positive impact on our community. Your continued support for efforts such as ours is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ron Schmitt
Sparks City Councilman

cc: Jon P. Heroux, Counsel
John Cuaderes, Staff Director

Enclosures



***Community Development Block Grant Program
Public Services***

Located within Washoe County in Northern Nevada, the Cities of Reno and Sparks are designated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Communities. According to the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, the total population of Washoe County was recorded at 339,486 with the City of Reno at 180,480 and the City of Sparks at 66,346. A recent population estimate prepared by the State of Nevada's Demographers Office

lists the City of Sparks' population as 81,673 with Reno at 199,249 as of 2004. Since 1990, Nevada has led the nation in the rate of population growth and Sparks is one of the fastest growing incorporated cities in Nevada. Through the CDBG program, the City of Sparks is committed to assisting low and moderately-low income individuals and families in our community. One mechanism of assistance is through grant funding for area non-profit programs that target services for low income persons and families. Pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations, 24CFR570.201(e)(1), communities have the ability to grant up to 15% of their entitlement dollars for eligible public service programs; an opportunity for service to the community the City of Sparks utilizes annually.

Through community survey and working groups, staff was informed non-profit agencies were put in the position of going from City Council to City Council to County Commission requesting funding for their programs, some were successful and would receive grants from all, some from none. A series of workshops were held with the public service agencies and interested citizens. The outcome of this effort was a consolidated process, where the Cities of Reno and Sparks joined with Washoe County to leverage their annual Public Service share of CDBG funds with other community support dollars to provide a single, annual grant making process, entitled the Washoe County Human Services Consortium. The consortium is governed by a board, a triumvirate, comprising of one elected official from each of the three local jurisdictions. This Triumvirate has final decision authority regarding these funds. This consolidated effort by the jurisdictions has successfully and effectively served the entire Reno, Sparks and Washoe County community and provided those much needed funds to serve low-income individuals and families. Our regional efforts creating a single process supporting the low-income community, was awarded a Best Practices Award from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1998.

Since 1996, the Cities of Reno and Sparks and Washoe County have leveraged an average of approximately \$1,000,000 annually, consisting of Community Development Block Grant (approximately 40% of the total funds), Emergency Shelter Grant, Low Income Housing Trust Fund, and Community Support (i.e. general fund tax dollars from the City of Sparks and Washoe County). Currently, the human service applicants are instructed to submit their application under one of following headings, described as follows:

- a. Basic Needs/Job Training/Education
Programs which provide basic material necessities for survival, including food, clothing,

and transportation. This includes disaster relief and advocacy service for basic needs entitlement. Literacy education and training – specific programs that provide formal, informal or supplemental education, literacy or job preparation or training which enhances a person's ability to become self sufficient and economically secure.

- b. Family Strengthening/Mental Health
Services that address mental health needs and help strengthen individuals and families. This includes general counseling, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, crisis intervention and suicide prevention programs.
- c. Health/Rehabilitation/Disabilities
Services geared to the promotion and maintenance of general health and treatment, including prevention, education and direct treatment. In addition, services that address the needs of physically and developmentally disabled persons and their families.
- d. Housing Assistance (LIHTF)
Programs for low and moderate-income individuals that prevent homelessness, such as housing assistance (mortgage payments, rent payments and deposits, etc.) utility payments and deposits, and security deposits.
- e. Seniors
Services specifically designed to assist persons 55 or older, including advocacy, accessibility to services, meals, home companions and other related programs that focus on the needs of the aging population.
- f. Youth
Programs which address full range of needs of children and youth eighteen years and younger, including character leadership development, volunteerism, recreation, day and resident camp, club programs, gang prevention.
- g. Child Care
Licensed or school based childcare services, or full time before and after school programs and related activities. Generally for infants and children through the age of 12.
- h. Substance Abuse
Services which are geared to those persons who are, and families with, victims of alcohol and/or chemical dependence. Includes prevention and education, direct treatment, support groups and counseling.

The grant making process takes place over approximately five (5) months during the fiscal year prior to the funding year. The Request for Proposals (RFPs) is made available to the public, typically in November with a due date in either late December or early January (depending how holidays fall and when the RFP is released). The typical methodology for notification is a display ad in the Reno Gazette Journal, the Sparks Tribune and Ahora, the area's Hispanic periodical. In addition, this information is posted on the jurisdictions' websites. Staff holds two (2) training sessions on the application; one in early to mid December and the other in January.

One session is held in the morning, the other an afternoon session and each is in a different geographic location in an effort to provide more convenient accessibility. The applications are due at one location, the Washoe County Manager's office. After the due date, copies of all completed, eligible applications are sorted by staff and provided to an Advisory Board for review and funding allocation recommendations. The Advisory Board is made up of three residents, plus one alternate, from each jurisdiction for a total of twelve members – nine active, three alternates. Advisory Board members serve three year terms up to two terms or a total of eight years should they replace someone mid-term. Alternates serve one year at a time, with no current limits. The members must apply through each jurisdiction and are interviewed and appointed by the Triumvirate. The Advisory Board typically meets throughout the year in preparation for the grant making process.

Applications and the evaluation tools/forms are typically distributed to the Advisory Board in January. In conjunction with the Advisory Board, a Task Force recently conducted a review of the grant making and funding allocation process. This Task Force was comprised of staff from each jurisdiction, three members of the Advisory Board – each representing Reno, Sparks or Washoe County, and members from the community and non-profit agencies at large. This Task Force developed an evaluation tool in which the applications are broken down and scored by application question. In addition, a recommendation of minimum scoring requirements was made to assist in the determination of which applications should receive funding.

As part of the process a series of Public Meetings/Hearings are conducted over a two week period in February/March. The number of public meetings depends on the total number of applications. The applicants are invited to these meetings in which they may make a three (3) minute presentation on their application and answer any questions the Advisory Board may have. On the final night, the Advisory Board divides up the available funds; however, they are only advisory in capacity; therefore, they do not make the final decision on funding. Those recommendations are presented in a final public hearing to the Triumvirate, the governing board. Typically, the Triumvirate does not overturn the recommendations.

In addition to this process, and as a condition to funding these programs, the Consortium requires each agency to submit program objectives and measurable outcomes for each objective. The jurisdictions compile this service data into a Consortium Annual Report which is used as an aide in determining needs met and gaps and grantee accountability. The following is an excerpt from the FY03/04 Annual Report showing one program's objectives and outcomes for the grant year.

C*A*R*E* Chest of the Sierra Nevada

– Medical Supplies and Equipment

Grant amount \$34,989

Provides prescription and required medical equipment assistance to low income or uninsured households. This program is a partnership with local health care, medical equipment and pharmaceutical enterprises. Primary goals include a reduction in the number of individuals living in assisted care facilities and prevent in-home accidents by providing durable medical equipment, such as grab bars and shower chairs; 1,000 individuals will be helped with 2,430 pieces of medical equipment. Increase the nutritional health of individuals in Washoe County who are unable to digest solid foods due to injury or illness; 220 individuals will be

helped with 620 cases of liquid nutrition products. Prevent diabetics from experiencing serious complications by providing necessary health maintenance items, such as glucometers, insulin, test strips, lancets; 400 diabetics will be helped with 800 items. Reduce the number of individuals suffering from chronic respiratory conditions by providing nebulizers and replacement circuits; 64 individuals will be assisted.

Measurable Outcomes:

1. 1,548 people were assisted with 2,852 medical equipment items.
2. 334 people were assisted with 601 cases of liquid nutrition.
3. 736 people were assisted with 1,631 diabetic items.
4. 84 people were assisted with respiratory equipment.

In addition to the above, the following is a recent "Client Spotlight" from the C*A*R*E* Chest:

"Long after Jonelle went her merry way, we could still hear her infectious laughter and feel the warmth of her personality in our heart. She is an inspiring unforgettable woman. Born with cerebral palsy, the doctors thought she was never going to speak, "I showed them and haven't stopped talking since" she boasted. At 13, she asked Child Protective Services to take her away from her abusive mother. "I finally got the guts to fight for myself" she recalls. Remaining in a foster home until graduating high school, Jonelle moved to a studio apartment. She loves her independence and welcomes challenges that come her way. At 26 years old, Jonelle is working towards a teaching degree. She is taking it slow but determined to fulfill her long time dream of teaching special needs children, "like me" she adds. Nothing seems to dampen the spirit of this jovial young woman who teaches those around her to embrace her disability. Recently she moved to Nevada to be close to her adopted mom, and while her MediCal is being switched to Nevada Medicaid, Jonelle came to C*A*R*E* Chest for help. While she waits for Medicaid, we loaned her an electric wheelchair that Jonelle sped off to the bus stop in, thrilled to finally explore her new neighborhood."

In Fiscal Year 2003/2004 (July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004) the following number of low- and moderately-low income clients was served under each of the service categories:

Funding/Service Category	Population Served
Basic Needs/Job Training/Education	41,037
Family Strengthening/Mental Health	20,077
Housing Assistance (LIHTF)	995
Seniors	3,603
Youth	438
Child Care	368
Substance Abuse	1,545
Total number of individuals served	71,008

Based upon the funding available and the population served, it can be extrapolated that 71,008 individuals were served at an average cost of \$11.72 per person. Programs recently funded were those such as the area's Food Bank; dental and health exams; services for abused women and families; literacy programs; youth mentoring; prevention of homelessness; child care and substance abuse treatment. This service data is also contained in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report to HUD.

In addition to compiling data reports for the community and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, staff reviews policies, procedures and processes each year. Over the ten years since inception, services have been consolidated in a reduction of potential duplication and grants have increased in value for greater service delivery. For example, during the initial year of inception, the Consortium administered sixty-two (62) grants, some as small dollar as \$1,000. For the upcoming year, twenty-three grants were approved for funding with the lowest funding level at \$20,234. By consolidating services and improving delivery, not only is the community better served but both the non-profit agency and local government staff have experienced a reduction in time needed for grant administration. For example, in the Consortium's first year, the City of Sparks administered twenty-eight grants. The year prior to the Consortium development, the City of Sparks administered in excess of thirty-five subrecipient grants. For the upcoming year, Sparks will administer five awards. Based upon these Consortium practices, the cities of Reno and Sparks were awarded a Best Practices Award from HUD in 1998. However, despite this recognition, the Consortium continues to meet with community representatives and review their process each year for ways to continually improve service delivery and client access to services. Because the City of Sparks does not provide direct client services such as that provided by a County Health Department, the Community Development Block Grant program provides the City of Sparks the mechanism to assist it's low and moderately-low income individuals and families who need assistance, but may not be able to afford it. Without the continued support of the Community Development Block Grant program, the core of our community, our citizens and most notably, the working poor, would be left behind.